

000 spilled salt, /99/ four-leaf clovers, hares crossing the roadway, etc., been altogether eradicated by science?

751 No matter how things may stand among us, superstition reigns
789 supreme among the Mossi. Amulets and talismans are greatly valued. Anything may contribute to their manufacture, from the highly prized head of a crowned crane to that of a hawk or a gray heron. Anything may be found in the numerous little bags which hang down a native's neck, from scraps of paper with a few words of Arabic scribbled upon them which Moslem Marabouts distribute in large numbers throughout the Sudan, to cowries or the ashes of every possible and imaginable root. There are amulet bracelets which are worn on the left arm and which protect against seuya sorcerers (see p. 127) if their wearer remembers to push them swiftly up his arm when meeting one of those dreadful soul-eaters. There are bracelets which protect people in fights, and iron rings which act as safeguards against snake bite. Do you want to be welcomed and accepted by the man whose daughter you wish to marry? Wear a certain bracelet on your right arm, and your hopes will come true.

Amulets are worn around the head, neck, arm, or wrist. They are sewn to the cap or to the clothes, attached to the belt, to the pipe, to the staff, anywhere. The list would be endless if we tried to enumerate all the various kinds of amulets. The shoulder blade of a beef fastened to the end of a stick and an iron chain stretched across the soukala entrance protect its inhabitants against a host of misfortunes and unpleasant nocturnal visitations. People consider themselves fortunate to possess such easy protection against the numerous spirits prowling for victims.

787 If you have dogs, watch them carefully. If they are so careless as to lie down or relieve themselves in a basket, or to vomit within the hut, kill them fast or you will die yourself. If your bitch bears only one puppy, kill her pitilessly. When the gray heron flies over the huts shrieking, mothers beat on their jars for fear that their children will get diarrhea. Hunters must not eat koba meat before they engage in their sport, and if they want to gain skill, they must 789 secure certain roots, cook them in water, and wash their hands with 224 the mixture.

777 Sunday is the day of the spirits, the day when koure is held. It is also a good day to build huts. There is nothing special about Monday, but you must be careful about Tuesday, for you never know what it

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769 destroy the yield. And, depending on his attentions to them, they can give or take away the good health necessary to carry him through the arduous activity of the rainy season when work is hardest, the granaries nearly empty, and food in short supply. Separate ancestral spirits look out for different aspects of the well-being of the individual. Satisfying their various sacrificial requirements is both expensive and time-consuming, but their good will is essential to the success of the farmer, and it is in his own best interest to be attentive to their needs.

THE EARTH CUSTODIANS

793 A close relationship exists between the control of the water supply
776 upon which the agricultural economy depends and the authority of the earth custodians in their role as intermediaries with the several manifestations of Wennam, the Mossi deity. The deity itself is somewhat aloof from the affairs of men, but through his specific manifestations and with the intercession of the earth custodians (*Tenga Soba namba*), descendants of the indigenous inhabitants of the Yatenga, the individual propitiates Wennam in order to control the various forces of the natural and supernatural environment upon which the success of his economic or social endeavor is dependent. Tenga Wende, his terrestrial manifestation, and Tido Wende, which gives life to the vegetable kingdom, are the aspects of Wennam which are most frequently evoked; but Siguiri Wende, the deified first ancestor of the Mossi; Ki Wende, the millet god; and Saga Wende, the rain deity, are also frequently called upon for help.

793 Each Mossi village in the Yatenga is divided into one or more areas,
each of which is in the "command" of one of the village earth custodians.

[36] Each of these areas contains both the dwelling of the Savadogo lineage of the earth custodian and the residence and farmlands of various "true" Mossi lineages. The head of each lineage maintains the good will of the terrestrial manifestation of the deity through the intercession of the earth custodian who "commands" his land. In some instances a lineage may own land under the authority of two different earth custodians; in this case offerings must be made at the shrine (*tenga*) of each.

793 The good fortune which may be secured through obedience to the
782 terrestrial manifestation of the deity (*Tenga Wende*) involves both sacrifices and gifts of money to the earth custodian and abstention from acts offensive to the earth. For example, sexual intercourse may take

[833] place only in a private courtyard or within the house. Violation of this
783 rule defiles the land and must be expiated through a special sacrifice and the payment of a fine to the earth custodian. Any lost object found in the

778 public way or in the bush is in the custody of the earth deity and must be turned over to the earth custodian to await the inquiry of the proper owners. If such objects are unclaimed, they are given to Tenga Wende

778 whose ancestors had ruled the soil of the territory. In the name of
 782 the Moro Naba, he entrusted him with the task of offering all those
 gifts to the Earth so that the latter might favor the sovereign.
 Ouagadougou Naba performed the sacrifice before the door of his soukala.

[F27] When the Moro Naba went to war, he also ordered the chief
 of Ouagadougou to perform a sacrifice to the Earth. The bara indi-
 cated what should be sacrificed in order to insure victory, to "break"
 the villages that were to be attacked.

782 When rain failed to come, the Moro Naba would go to the
 hillock at Koumbé /sic/-Padanda, and have the head of the quarter
 offer a sacrifice (beef, sheep, chicken) to secure rain. If rain
 refused to come, the bara were consulted once more, and sacrifices
 were offered until it came.

776 The Mossi also have a sky god whom they call Ounam as well
 782 as Naba Ouendé or Naba Ouondé, meaning "Sun Chief." This is a
 794 trace of the sun cult, which is unusual in Black West Africa, all
 opinions to the contrary notwithstanding. /590/ The majority of
 the Mossi sacrifice much more to ancestors and to the Earth than to
 Naba Ouondé, who is to them a somewhat remote god.

794 It must be added that Lieutenant Desplagnes found among the
 782 Mossi an esoteric cult of the sun, moon, and fire, which is peculiar
 to religious initiates (Ouango) whom we shall mention later.

"The Hougho-Ouango of the Mossi (among the Mossi, those
 priests reside in the villages of Boujema, Mani, Kondogho, Yolo,
 and Tio) sacrifice to the sun in order to bind it to the Earth. They
 do this morning and evening, sunrise and sunset, during the first week
 of the winter season, and every six days in the morning at sunrise thereafter.
 [F78] They also go to altars made of three conical stones and offer sacri-
 fices and libations, always surrounded by the populace, family
 heads, drummers, and familial masks (ouango).

794 "Those priests tend the sacred fire throughout the year in a
 372 small, highly adorned recess dug into one of their house walls. At
 783 the end of the rainy season they will use it to light the great purifying
 bush fires.

794 "They perform sacrifices at every new moon, and they have
 782 seven important feasts a year for their divinity. Finally, during
 the solar festivities, they use a cow's tail to tie down the sun to
 the earth and to bind its life-giving heat." (Le Plateau central
nigérien /The Central/Nigerian Plateau/, pages 275 and 276.)

KINGSHIP AND CHIEFSHIP

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mal lineage segment except the pretenders to the throne shaved their heads as a sign of mourning. The royal pretenders donned sheepskin mantles to signify that they were willing to "eat the nam." Once the ruler had been buried, the country settled down to an uneasy peace until the eighth day, when the funeral ceremonies took place. In the meantime, the Napoko symbolically held daily court, and the Tansoba's army acted as a check against the attempts of ambitious princes to seize power by force of arms. [70]

Two days before the funeral, the Kamsaogho Naba selected the Kourita, who was to replace the Napoko as the living symbolic representative of the dead Mogho Naba. The person chosen to be Kourita was usually a young son of the deceased king, but since this person was banished from the capital, most of the royal wives hid their young children or fled the palace with them.³³ Once the Kourita had been chosen, the Kamsaogho Naba performed a ceremony (similar to those connected with the divine kings of the Near East) during which the youth was given one of his father's horses, dressed in his father's clothes, and given his father's youngest widow as a wife. He was then paid the homage due the Mogho Naba, and after receiving many gifts from the dignitaries, he was banished from Ouagadougou forever. As he went through the country, he was treated like the Mogho Naba and given many wives and presents. If he should chance to return to Ouagadougou or see the new Mogho Naba, either or both of them would be killed by the ancestors. Many Mossi districts seem to have been founded by exiled Kouritadamba. These men were undoubtedly among the numerous "elder" sons of past kings who are said to have "refused" the nam and gone to live in the districts now governed by their descendants. [17] [43] [634]

The choice and banishment of the Kourita heralded the funeral rites, which were characterized by numerous animal sacrifices to the ancestors in the name of the deceased ruler. On the afternoon of the first day of the funeral, the Crown Prince mounted a horse and left the palace by the women's door. The Napoko then took the bridle of her brother's horse and led him and an immense crowd of cavalry, armed warriors, and musicians around the palace walls three times. After the third round, the Napoko demanded that her brother give her a personal servant as a present; he hesitated, but finally granted her request. The Napoko was then lifted up by the warriors, who shouted as they carried her home. The funeral thus came to an end. [644] [643] [782] [788]

All Mossi potentates tried to emulate the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou in matters of pomp, ceremony, and government.³⁴ Their courts were inferior to his, but only because they were less powerful and less wealthy. [631] [184] [643] [644]